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ABSTRACT

While the effects of maternal employment on women have been highlighted in the literature, less attention has been given to the effects of maternal employment on men. This study examined the interaction of work sources and family sources of stress on the psychological health of men in single- and dual-earner families. Questionnaires on background characteristics, work experiences, family experiences, and psychological health outcomes were completed by fathers and mothers of second, third, or fourth grade students in three elementary schools. Scales of job stress, family stress, and strain reactions (job dissatisfaction, depressed mood, psychological disturbance, self-esteem, and negligent health practices) were completed by 40 fathers in single-worker and 46 fathers in dual-worker families. No significant differences were found in magnitude or components of job and family stressors or on psychological health outcomes. Significant interactive effects of joint family and work stress were found on three of the five outcome measures: the interaction of high family and high job stress had an adverse effect over and above the impact of the combined direct effects of these stressors, but only for men in dual-earner families. (Author/NB)

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INTERACTION OF WORK AND FAMILY STRESS ON FATHERS IN SINGLE AND DUAL-EARNER FAMILIES [1]

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Scales of job stress, family stress, and strain reactions (job dissatisfaction, depressed mood, psychological disturbance, self esteem and negligent health practices) were completed by 40 fathers in single-worker and 46 fathers in dual-earner families. No significant differences were found in magnitude or components of job and family stressors or on psychological health outcomes. However, significant interactive effects of joint family and work stress were found on three of the five outcome measures; the interaction of high family and high job stress had an adverse effect over and above the impact of the combined direct effects of these stressors, but only for men in dual-earner families.

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Interaction of Work and Family Stress on Fathers in Single and Dual-Earner Families

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While the effects of maternal employment on women have been highlighted in both the popular and scientific literature, far less attention has been given to its effects on men's lives. What are the consequences of dual-earner marriages for husbands? The picture is confusing partly due to the fact that only a small number of studies have focused on the husband (Coleman, 1985; Gilbert, 1985; Staines, Pottick & Fudge, 1986), and these studies often conflict when it comes to pinpointing the nature and degree of stress experienced by men in dual-worker marriages (Skinner, 1980; Yogev, 1982). Although current literature suggests identity problems, reduced self esteem, feelings of deprivation, depression, lowered life and job satisfaction, and overload (Coleman, 1985; Pearlin, 1975; Pleck, 1985; Staines, Pottick & Fudge, 1986), a definitive picture of the strain outcomes that may be experienced as a result of these stressors is lacking. Thus, the focus in the present study is on the male in the multiple roles he enacts as husband, father, and worker. Measures of multiple strain outcomes as well as both

job and family sources of stress were included in this study.

The joint effects of family and work experience on health status have not been seriously considered in the past. However, two studies (Dytell & Pardine, 1983; Pardine, Higgins, Szeglin, Beres, Kravitz & Fotis, 1981) have found that life events act as moderator variables on work experiences and suggest that these stressors combine multiplicatively such that relatively severe strain reactions occur only if high levels stress exist both on- and off-the-job.

In the present study, we sought to locate and compare differences in the magnitude and specific components of both work stress and family stress experienced by men in single and dual-worker families, as well as differences in psychological health outcomes. The form of the relationship between stress and strain made up the second part of the analyses. Specifically, this study examined the interaction of work sources amd family sources of stress on the psychological health of men in single and dual-worker families.

Method

Questionnaires were distributed to every second, third and fourth grade student in all three elementary schools in a surburban school district. This district was chosen because it included a wide range of occupations and both working and middle class families. One third of the

questionnaires were addressed to the male and two thirds to the female parent. Data from questionnaires completed by 86 males will be examined in this paper. The mean age was 39.2 years and these males were married an average of 14.9. years with 2.5 children apiece. The average age of the youngest child was 6.8 years.

Questionnaire

The questionnaire elicited information on background characteristics, work experiences, family experiences, and psychological health outcomes.

Job stress was assessed with 7-point Likert scales (Dytell, 1987; Dytell & Pardine, 1983; Dytell & Schwartzberg, 1986) tapping 11 work stress dimensions including: Job Role Ambiguity, Job Role Overload, Conflicting Job Demands, Work Disruptions, Repetitive Work, Lack of Autonomy, Job Nonchallenge, Dependency at Work, Task Insignificance, Lack of Resources, and Work Environment Discomfort. Family stress was also assessed with 7-point Likert scales (Dytell & Schwartzberg, 1986) tapping eight family stress dimensions including: Family Role Insignificance, Family Role Overload, Conflicting Demands at Home, Family Role Ambiguity, Nonchallenge at Home, Lack of Emotional Support from Child(ren), Lack of Emotional Support from Spouse, and Lack of Task Sharing. All of the above scales were scored such that a higher score reflected greater magnitude of stress.

Five separate measures of psychological health status were included. Two of these tapped psychological status during the previous three-month period: Langner's (1962) 22-item screening scale for psychological disturbance and Zung's (1965) 8-item index of depressed mood. Both of these measures were scored such that the higher score reflected greater disturbance. The third outcome measure, the 10-item Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (1965) was scored in the direction of higher self esteem. The fourth measure, negligent health practices for the past three months was rated on a 5-point scale (5 = "I have taken very poor care of myself"). The final outcome, job satisfaction was tapped with a 4-point scale, in which a higher value indicated greater satisfaction.

Results

Means and standard deviations for all measures were calculated separately for men in single and dual-earner families and are reported in Table 1. As can be seen from the *t* - tests also presented in Table 1, there were few differences in the reports of fathers with employed and

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Table 1 about here

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nonemployed spouses and these were of only borderline significance. Fathers in single-earner families reported a greater lack of emotional support from both children and spouse than men from dual-earner families, while men in

dual-earner families reported higher work environment discomfort than men in single-earner families. No differences between these two groups were found on any measure of strain reaction. Thus, the only overall difference found was on the family stress measures, but it was not in the expected direction; fathers in dual-earner families were not suffering from greater stress in the family and they were not exhibiting greater strain reactions.

Product-moment correlation coefficients between predictor variables and psychological health outcomes were calculated for single and dual-earner families and are reported in Table 2. As expected, outcome measures

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Table 2 about here

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correlated significantly with family stress and with work stress dimensions. The most sensitive measures, in this respect, were those of depressed mood, psychological disturbance and job satisfaction. It is interesting to note that both groups were equally sensitive to familial sources of stress while psychological health outcomes were correlated with a greater number of individual job stressors among men in single than dual-earner families. Work role ambiguity, work role overload, lack of autonomy, work role insignificance and work environment discomfort demonstrated consistent relationships with all of the outcome measures

but only for men in single and not for males in dual-worker families.

Multiple regression techniques were employed for analyzing the joint effects of family stress and work stress. The findings from these analyses are reported in Table 3 for men in single-earner and Table 4 for men in dual-earner families. The tables present both the two-factor and three-factor regression equations for the prediction of psychological health outcomes. The two-factor equations

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Tables 3 and 4 about here

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represent the prediction based on the sum of the direct effects of family and work stress. In the three-factor equations, the interaction of family by work stress (the cross-product of stressor scores) is added to the combined direct effects. Our primary interest concerns the significance of the increment in explained variance ($\underline{R}^2$) when the term for the cross-product of stressors is added to the combined direct effects, that is, the difference between the $\underline{R}^2$ value for the two-factor equation and the $\underline{R}^2$ value for the three-factor equation. Where the increment in explained variance is significant, it is due to the addition of interaction term.

No significant interactive effects were found for men in the more traditional single paycheck families. However, significant interactive effects of family and work stress

were observed for men in dual-earner families on three of the five outcome measures (see Table 4). For the analysis on psychological disturbance, the increment in $\underline{R}^2$ accounted for by the family X work stress effect equalled 9.9%, $\underline{F}(1,36) = 4.85$, $\underline{p} < .05$. Similarly, the regression on job satisfaction yielded a reliable interaction term for family X work stress, $\underline{R}^2$ Increment = 9.9%, $\underline{F}$ (1,36) = 6.84, $\underline{p} < .01$. Finally, analyses on the negligence measure also revealed a significant increment in $\underline{R}2$ due to family X work stress, $\underline{R}^2$ Increment = 10.0%, $\underline{F}$ (1,36) = 3.96, $\underline{p}$ =.05.

It should be noted that in the three-factor equation for psychological disturbance, neither the β_1 (work effects) nor the β_2 term (family effects) was significant. This means that the presence of a significant regression for family or job stress was completely dependent on the interaction. In other words, only the combination of heightened levels of both job stress and family stress, produced severe psychological adjustment problems for men in two paycheck families. However, in the three factor equations for job satisfaction and negligent health practices, both β_2 (family effects) and β_3 (interaction effects) were significant. This means that in addition to the interactive effects of high job and high family stress, heightened levels of family stress alone were also responsible for some of the negative consequences in men with employed spouses.

Discussion

The findings of this study suggest that there are no differences in the magnitude of stress or strain reactions experienced by men in single and dual-earner families. Men with employed wives do not suffer from any greater family nor work stress than do men with nonemployed wives. More importantly, the initial warnings of the dire consequences to be expected from maternal employment have not come to fruition, at least, not for the husbands; men with employed wives are psychologically as healthy as men married to housewives. This appears to be consistent with recent reports that the advantages for the husband of having an employed spouse outweigh any disadvantages (Bein & Nienstadt, 1985; Booth, 1979; Gaesser & Whitburner, 1985).

However, the most important findings in our study concern the determinants of the interrelated measures of psychological health. Results indicate that job and family stress combine multiplicatively in determining health status, that is, <u>both</u> a high level of stress at home and a high level of stress on the job must be present to produce strain reactions in men with working wives. Thus, it is only in this extreme condition that maternal employment contributes to negative consequences for the husband. This is consistent with earlier findings in managers of work and nonwork stress combining multiplicatively (Dytell & Pardine, 1985; Pardine, Higgins, Szeglin, Beres, Kravitz & Fotis, 1981).

Why was the combination of high job and high family stress so potent for men in dual-earner families and seemingly so impotent for men in single-earner families? There is some indication that the interaction of job and family in single-earner families was not as ineffectual as first appears. For men with nonemployed wives, the two-factor regression equations indicate that on four of the five outcomes, work alone or in combination with family stress was a significant predictor of poor psychological health. However, in the three-factor equations, none of the main effects remain significant. This is probably due to the purification of the direct effects with the entry of the cross-products; when these cross-products were entered into the regression equation, the intercorrelations between each of the direct effects and the interaction was partialed out of each of the respective direct effects. Thus, the magnitude of the interaction is demonstrated by its ability to reduce the formerly significant direct effects to insignificance when the intercorrelations are removed.

The interaction of stress on the job and at home may be important for men in single paycheck homes; it is certainly a very significant element in the etiology of psychological health problems for men in two-earner families . Why? A relevant factor in understanding the importance of the interaction of job and family experience may be husband's psychological involvement in job and family. Core role theories assume the centrality of paid work in men's lives

(Barnett & Baruch, 1987). This appears to be true of our sample of men in single-earner families; the direct effect of work stress was a significant predictor of four of the five strain reactions studied. However, this traditional conception must be modified to allow for the growing importance of family among men. In our sample of men in dual-earner families, family stress was a significant predictor of depression and psychological disturbance in the two-factor regression equations, and of job dissatisfaction and negligence in the three-factor equations. This is consistent with Pleck's (1985) finding that family roles were experienced by husbands as more significant than their paid work roles and that these non-workplace roles had greater impact on men's psychological well-being.

Men in single-earner families appear to be less sensitive to family experience than men in dual-earner families and this difference in sensitivity and involvement in the family may account for the insignificance or significance of the interaction of job and family stress. We would expect a significant interaction only in the specific condition when both family and job spheres are important areas of involvement; only then would stresses from one areas spillover into the other and significantly affect psychological outcomes. This finding on the importance of family is consistent with recent findings that men in contemporary culture are more prone to seek their primary gratification in the family setting (Dubin, 1956;

Farrell & Rosenberg, 1981; Lein, Durham, Pratt, Schudson, Thomas & Weiss, 1983).

It is interesting to note that the only significant difference in job experiences was on work environment discomfort with men in dual-earner families reporting greater problems. However, in previous research (Dytell & Pardine, 1983), the work environment factor was found to combine multiplicatively with nonwork experience. It is conceiveable that men in dual-earner families who suffer from high family stress may be looking to escape to a pleasant work environment. But when a physically pleasant environment is not provided, they may be more sensitive to the source of stress and feel "trapped".

What are the implications that can be derived from this study?. First, the lives of fathers in dual-worker marriages are not as stressful as the myth might lead us to believe. In addition, fathers in dual-earner marriages are as psychologically healthy as men in single earner families. The most important finding, however, concern the interaction of job stress and family stress for the interrelated measures of psychological adjustment. It is the combination of high family and high job stress that leads to psychological health problems, but only for men in dual and not for men in single-earner families. It has been suggested that there may be a differential significance of family and work roles for men in single and dual-earner families and future research should examine the differences in these

involvements. Futhermore, this differential significance may underlie the differences in the findings on the interaction of job and family, that is, the significance of the interaction for fathers in dual and its lack of significance for fathers in single-earner families.

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Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and T-Values for all Stressors

and Psychological Health Outcomes for Fathers in Single and Dual-Earner Families

	Single-Earner (N=40)		Dual-Earner (N=46)		
	M	SD	M	SD	T-Value
Total Family Stress	51.622	13.572	48.378	12.865	1.11
Family Role Insignificance	7.105	3.109	7.333	2.977	0.34
Family Role Overload	7.325	3.308	6.739	2.304	0.96
Conflicting Demands at Home	6.950	3.412	6.435	2.786	0.77
Family Role Ambiguity	5.769	2.600	4.913	2.365	1.59
Nonchallenge at Home	10.359	4.295	9.565	3.318	0.96
Lack Emotional Support-Child	4.325	2.454	3.457	1.773	1.90*
Lack Emotional Support-Wife	4.744	2.935	3.848	1.977	1.67*
Lack Task Sharing	4.200	1.856	4.022	1.640	0.47
Total Job Stress	65.909	18.758	63.200	20.265	0.64
Job Role Ambiguity	8.525	3.266	8.800	3.402	0.38
Job Role Overload	6.325	3.222	6.391	3.214	0.10
Conflicting Job Demands	3.650	1.994	3.239	1.852	0.99
Work Disruptions	4.450	1.986	4.356	1.967	0.22
Repetitive Work	5.550	2.183	6.000	3.033	0.78
Lack of Autonomy	6.675	3.846	6.739	3.356	0.08
Job Nonchallenge	5.125	4.575	4.674	2.504	0.58
Dependency at Work	3.400	2.240	3.326	1.814	0.17
Task Insignificance	9.100	4.125	9.130	4.544	0.03
Lack of Resources	5.250	3.193	5.804	2.638	0.88
Work Environment Discomfort	5.150	3.453	6.522	3.692	1.77*
Outcomes					
Job Satisfaction	3.026	1.000	2.978	0.783	0.25
Esteem	41.949	7.850	43.522	6.345	1.02
Depression	22.087	6.866	24.125	7.297	1.33
Psychological Disturbance	2.730	2.567	2.364	2.973	0.59
Negligence	2.225	0.660	2.261	0.743	0.24

*$p < .10$

Table 2

Significant* Correlation Coefficients between Stressors and

Psychological Health Outcomes for Men in Single and Dual-Earner Families

	Esteem		Depression		Psy. Disturbance		Neglisence		Job Satisfaction	
	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D	S	D
Total Family Stress	-.397	-.381	.634	.595	.578	.412	.305		-.303	-.336
Family Role Insignificance		-.307	.464	.453	.421		.439			
Family Role Overload	-.359		.269	.476	.321	.413				
Conflicting Demands at Home			.439		.441				-.527	
Family Role Ambiguity		-.381		.538		.291	.274			-.309
Nonchallenge at Home	-.418		.514	.274	.551	.328				
Lack Emotional Support-Child			.426	.445						-.284
Lack Emotional Support-Wife		-.369		.476		.315				-.324
Lack Task Sharing			.369		.318	.348			-.335	
Total Job Stress	-.411	-.358	.607	.398	.582	.256	.396		-.645	-.589
Job Role Ambiguity	-.366	-.251	.467	.442	.500	.423	.384		-.306	-.296
Job Role Overload	-.304		.439	.397	.494	.391	.315		-.348	-.297
Conflicting Job Demands				.278	.282	.339	.295		-.398	
Work Disruptions			.403		.360					-.319
Repetitive Work	-.421	-.378	.561	.270	.593		.302		-.673	-.575
Lack of Autonomy	-.302		.361		.374				-.445	-.421
Job Nonchallenge										
Dependency at Work	-.383	-.261	.567	.323	.291		.350		-.340	-.573
Task Insignificance				.327		.317	.350		-.442	-.376
Lack of Resources	-.277	-.283	.396		.330		.311	.362	-.455	-.359
Work Environment Discomfort										

*p < .05

Table 3

Multiple Regression Equations for the Combined Direct and Interactive Effects of Family and Job Stress on Psychological Health Outcomes of Men in Single-Earner Families

Variables and Effects Tested	β_1	β_2	β_3	R^2
Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction				
Work (1) + Family (2)	-.6630**	-.0369		.4643
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-.6547	-.0315	-.0119	.4629
Dependent Variable: Esteem				
Work (1) + Family (2)	-.2676	-.2748		.2176
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-.0088	-.0963	-.3986	.2209
Dependent Variable: Depression				
Work (1) + Family (2)	.4447**	.4414**		.5807
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	.4582	.4502	-.0196	.5807
Dependent Variable: Pychological Disturbance				
Work (1) + Family (2)	.3951*	.4026*		.4706
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-.2056	.0146	.8662	.4862
Dependent Variable: Negligence				
Work (1) + Family (2)	.4406*	.0567		.2213
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-.3871	-.4779	1.1935	.2509

Note: t tests were employed to evaluate the significance of the β coefficients in two-factor (df=37) and three-factor (df=36) equations.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$

Table 4

Multiple Regression Equations for the Combined Direct and Interactive Effects of Family and Job Stress on Psychological Health Outcomes of Men in Dual-Earner Families

Variables and Effects Tested	β_1	β_2	β_3	R^2
Dependent Variable: Job Satisfaction				
Work (1) + Family (2)	-.6199**	.0120		.3778
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	.5476	1.0925*	-1.9344*	.4771
Dependent Variable: Esteem				
Work (1) + Family (2)	-.2746	-.2762		.2186
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	.3763	.3263	-1.0786	.2494
Dependent Variable: Depression				
Work (1) + Family (2)	.1535	.5090**		.3516
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-.5075	-.1027	1.0953	.3834
Dependent Variable: Psychological Disturbance				
Work (1) + Family (2)	.0907	.3556*		.1632
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	-1.0772	-.7253	1.9353*	.2626
Dependent Variable: Negligence				
Work (1) + Family (2)	-.0568	.0566		.0036
Work (1) + Family (2) + WxF(3)	1.1067	1.1335*	-1.9280*	.1022

Note: t tests were employed to evaluate the significance of the β coefficients in two-factor (df=37) and three-factor (df=36) equations.

*$p < .05$ **$p < .01$